

Congressman DeFazio firmly believes that it is an obligation of the federal government, not an option, to properly take care of the men and women who proudly serve in our nation's armed forces. Throughout his time in Congress he has fought to ensure that the United States makes good on that obligation. In recent years Congress has passed long overdue funding increases for the VA, and Congressman DeFazio has always insisted that these funds translate into better service for Oregon Veterans.

These men and women fought for their country. They should not have to fight the Veterans Administration for the benefits and services they earned. Congressman DeFazio has two full-time staff members in his Eugene district office devoted to helping veterans navigate the system.

Congressman DeFazio urges veterans to call his Eugene office at 1-800-944-9603 if they are having problems with the VA.

Congressman DeFazio served in the United States Air Force Reserve from June 1967 until his honorable discharge with the rank of 2nd Lt. on March 30, 1971.

Oregon Veterans

When service cuts were proposed at the Roseburg VA Medical Center, Congressman DeFazio stood up and demanded that no changes be made without the input of local veterans.

Congressman DeFazio understands that VA bureaucrats do not always know what is best for Oregon veterans, and has worked to make sure that Veterans in Southwest Oregon have a say in the healthcare they receive. Joined by Senator Wyden, Congressman DeFazio sent a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Shinseki, asking that he suspend any cuts in service at the Roseburg VA Medical Center and requesting an independent review of any proposed changes in service.

For a link to the independent review [click here](#) .

In order to ensure that veterans across rural Oregon are able to access the care that they have earned, Congressman DeFazio introduced H.R. 3358, the Troops' Soft Landing, Employment, and Rural Transportation Act. Among many other benefits for veterans, the bill authorizes the VA to establish a grant program to provide transportation to veterans in highly rural areas.

Veterans Benefits

The last thing that a disabled veteran should be forced to deal with is a bureaucratic battle between the Pentagon and the VA regarding their pay. Congressman DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 333, which would finally allow all disabled veterans to receive both their VA and Department of Defense (DoD) pay. This is the most comprehensive concurrent receipt legislation ever introduced.

To correct another inequity in veterans pay, Congressman DeFazio introduced H.R. 2673, the Equal Treatment for Widows of Wartime Veterans Act, by simply making the VA benefit for a surviving spouse equal to that of a single wartime veteran.

VA Medical Care

Congressman DeFazio has consistently fought for better VA medical care that will meet the needs of every veteran, from WWII vets to the men and women now returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. For years the VA suffered from budgetary neglect, resulting in subpar services. Congressman DeFazio has consistently voted to increase funding for the VA so that it can provide proper care to every veteran in the VA system. In 2010, Congress approved a \$14.5 billion increase over 2009 funding levels, and will provide much needed service to 6.1 million patients including approximately 419,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite increased funding for the VA, too many men and women returning from war remain mired in red tape while trying to get treatment and compensation for PTSD. To ensure that these veterans are able to access the benefits that they earned without a hassle, Congressman

DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 952, the COMBAT PTSD Act. The bill would lower the burdensome threshold that veterans have to meet to receive compensation for PTSD.

The recently passed health care reform bill does not alter the federal government's commitment to providing unique and comprehensive medical coverage to all those who have served or are still serving in the military. TRICARE and VA programs were fully protected in the legislation. One provision of the health care reform bill, however, might be helpful to some veterans and active duty service members. Health care reform allows children to remain on their parents' insurance plan until age 26. Congressman DeFazio introduced H.R. 5185, the Fair Care for Military Families Act, which would simply extend that benefit to the families covered by CHAMPVA or TRICARE. Provisions to extend TRICARE and CHAMPVA coverage until age 26 were ultimately included in the 2011 Department of Defense Authorization Act, which passed in the House with Congressman DeFazio's support.

Congressman DeFazio was also a cosponsor of H.R. 1657, a bill authored by Oregon Representative Kurt Schrader, which would require the Secretary of Defense to promptly notify any military personnel if they were potentially exposed to known toxins. This would help to limit cases like that of Oregon National Guard soldiers serving in Iraq who were unknowingly exposed to toxic chemicals only to later end up with "mysterious" health complications.

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[Wyden, DeFazio alarmed over Roseburg VA service changes](#) *Roseburg News-Review* April 14, 2010

[WWII vet Glenn Butler receives Bronze Star](#) *Roseburg News-Review* July 11, 2010

[Local Veterans Receive Bronze Stars, Purple Heart](#) *KEZI News* July 8, 2010

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